

Consumer Choice

Providing consumers with accurate information upon which they can make informed decisions can be a very useful tool in driving changes. There are many programs that are predicated on consumer choice. Cars are labeled with expected fuel efficiency ratings. Major home appliances have energy labels which can be used for comparisons. Plumbing fixtures show the water use. The clear intent is that consumers will use these labels to make more informed purchasing decisions.

A similar approach can be used for California's Green Chemistry Initiative. Dow supports transparency regarding the potential health and environmental impacts of the products we manufacture which must be the basis of any "informed choice" program. This is an integral part of Dow's 2015 Products Safety Assessment goal where we are making product safety information available on all our products or product families (www.dowproductsafety.com). We also support providing this information in a way that is understandable to consumers and includes consideration of the entire life cycle of our products.

Polls have shown that consumers want to have the information they desire readily available to them so that they are able to make informed decisions about the products they purchase. This must be a shared responsibility of the value chain.

In general, Dow products are not sold directly to consumers. However as a global company, supplying thousands of products, Dow participates in virtually every sector in some way. Any approach to provide information to consumers should engage the full value chain. Dow is willing to collaborate to develop relevant information for institutions and consumers to consider in their purchasing decisions.

A number of factors should be considered when evaluating particular products for a specific use or application. First and foremost, the product has to provide the functionality and performance necessary and be safe when used as intended. This is a key priority for Dow and is supported by our product safety commitment. The product also must be cost-effective from the user's perspective. These are fundamentals of any free market society, but as we incorporate a sustainability perspective, there are other considerations such as environmental impacts (water, emissions, hazards, energy, green house gases, etc.) and social considerations (worker safety, basic human needs for food, water, shelter and health, etc.). These considerations need to be assessed over the product's full life cycle if more informed decisions are to be made.

While most of the initial consumer labels focused on single attributes (water, energy or fuel efficiency), most purchasing decisions are not that simple. Typically in green chemistry, there are a number of attributes that must be evaluated. A food nutrition label is perhaps a more analogous situation where consumers need to consider a variety of factors (sugar, protein, fat), various desirable nutrients (vitamins, minerals) and some to be avoided or minimized (sodium, saturated fat). A consumer choice approach to green

chemistry, like a food nutrition label, would provide the relevant information in the hands of consumers and allows each person to make the most appropriate choice for their situation. It is critical to define the components and metrics for such a label, and the process should engage all of the stakeholders in its development.

It is important to remember that all products have risks and impacts associated with them that need to be understood and managed. This applies equally to both existing and emerging "green chemistry" approaches. Simply stated, "green" does not mean "risk-free."

We believe that reliable information on key environmental and social dimensions of products will enable customers, including businesses and other institutions, to make more informed purchasing decisions, and these decisions can drive changes in markets and the types of products which are provided. We would welcome the opportunity to work with the State of California to develop such an approach.